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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [CU](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAKIA PREDICTS LONG TRANSITION IN CUBA

REF: STATE 125684

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES LAWRENCE R. SILVERMAN FOR REASON 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Pol-Econ officers discussed Castro succession and Slovak-Cuban relations August 3 with MFA Director for the Americas Dusan Kristofik, per reftel. According to Kristofik, Slovakia expects a long transition period from a Fidel Castro-led regime to a more democratic government. The opposition in Cuba is weak and not well-organized. The security forces on the island are very strong; the Army is loyal to the regime and has strong financial interests to stay in power. Kristofik believes the military would not hesitate to use force, and said that Slovakia's major aim is for a peaceful transition.

¶2. (C) Kristofik said Slovakia did not intend to send a message of best wishes for Fidel Castro's upcoming eightieth birthday. He described Slovakia's approach to undemocratic regimes in Belarus and Cuba. Just as Slovakia had not sent a congratulatory message when Lukashenko won an undemocratic election, Slovakia saw no reason to embrace an undemocratic transition to rule by Raul Castro.

¶3. (C) Slovak Ambassador to Cuba Hlavacek had been in the running to become an MFA State Secretary (Deputy Minister), but since he did not get the job he will return to Havana in September. He plans to continue reaching out to Cubans in the public sector, in the provinces, and in the dissident community. Plans to open an internet cafe at the Slovak embassy are still on track, though the MFA realizes that not only "ordinary citizens" will be interested in visiting. They are therefore developing an appointment and name-check system.

¶4. (C) Kristofik said the MFA is processing Agreement for a new Cuban Ambassador to Slovakia. He had been worried that Cuba would not send a new ambassador and would ask Slovakia to downgrade its presence in Havana to a Charge d'Affaires, so the MFA was glad to receive the agreement request. Despite maintaining diplomatic relations, Kristofik said the bilateral relationship is not normal. Ambassador Hlavacek has been in Havana for a year and a half and has never been received by the Cuban Foreign Minister. Kristofik said the MFA will grant agreement to the Cuban, then Hlavacek will immediately request a meeting with Perez Roque. The level of response from the GOC will determine the level at which the new Cuban Ambassador is received in Bratislava.

¶5. (C) After democracy promotion, Slovakia's major interest in Cuba is receiving payment for old Czechoslovak debt held by Cuba. If the Cuban Foreign Minister agrees to receive Ambassador Hlavacek, Slovakia will offer to establish a Joint Economic Commission. So far, Cuba has refused to discuss the

debt due to the lack of a "bilateral framework." The Slovak offer to establish the commission would be conditioned on a commitment by Cuba to discuss the debt issue. It is unclear how much the debt is worth because it was registered in convertible pesos. The first step in debt negotiations would be to agree on an exchange rate for convertible pesos in the 1980s to today's U.S. dollar. The other small bit of trade between Cuba and Slovakia is a Slovak company that provides small electric power stations. Kristofik said the company has not had problems collecting payment from the regime; Castro needs the stations.

SILVERMAN